

On COVID, and much else, Canada has taken leave of its senses

by Conrad Black



The whole tenor of public discourse in this country has become so absurd that Canadians should consider if we are, as a nationality, taking complete leave of our senses. Canada's entire COVID lockdown policy, combined with our negligent failure to obtain adequate supplies of vaccine, has been a disaster, yet the Trudeau government is still preening itself about it, and the opposition isn't scoring. It was obvious on the available facts almost a year ago that the COVID-19 survival rate was 99 per cent for healthy people up to 65, and approximately 95 per cent for the elderly and infirm and that the only successful approach was to pull out all stops to develop a vaccine while segregating the elderly and otherwise

vulnerable and permitting the remaining 80 per cent of society to get on with their lives. As usual, Canada fell in with the U.S. fad, but we completely failed to provide for vaccine, with the result that we are now the most backward advanced country in the northern hemisphere in actually resolving the problem: Seven per cent of our population has been fully vaccinated, compared to 11 per cent in Mexico, 22 per cent in Poland which has less than a third of our standard of living, 42 per cent in the United States, the country that we were otherwise imitating, and 59 per cent in Israel. The last two countries have effectively reached herd immunity, are wide open, and fatalities are plummeting. When Drs. Banting and McLeod won the Nobel Prize for the discovery of insulin in 1923 Canada was an advanced pharmacological country and Connaught Laboratories was a supplier to the world of many medicines. Sustained public policy errors have left us with almost no pharmacological industry and when events like the COVID pandemic occur, we are sitting ducks, susceptible to officially ordered transmogrification into cowardly, (impecunious) moles, cogs in the Davos-Trudeau ambition to turn us into socialistic eco-geeks of the Great Reset.

It is now obvious that the coronavirus generated two genius acts of improvisation: in China – where the virus likely originated, and possibly from a lab leak – the state suppressed its spread with totalitarian methods, and exported it to the world, dealing the West a crushing economic blow, millions of deaths, and generating the Trump-hate coalition's other marvelous improvisation – the Democratic media, which made the campaign for the wax-works nominee, terrorized the country to drive Trump from office, and he happened to be the only world leader seriously facing up to the China challenge. He was defamed for bungling the pandemic, but he was chiefly responsible for the rapid development of the vaccine. Most of Europe wallowed in the exaggerated woes of the Coronavirus, but none more proudly and "systemically" than Canada. My wife recently returned from two weeks in the U.S. and was handed a

form that advised her that "Since you recently entered Canada with no symptoms of COVID-19, you must quarantine for a minimum of 14 days," failing which, "could lead to a ticket of up to \$5000, six months in prison, and/or fines of up to \$750,000." Any violation of quarantine that could be imputed to have contributed to the death of someone else and "you could face a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or imprisonment of up to three years or both." Have we gone mad? This is authoritarian nonsense in support of an insane policy.

In "following the science" over COVID, we were led astray, just as we have been in the hysteria about climate change. This is a very murky area that requires research rather than instant radical and economically destructive action. If the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff really told President Biden that the greatest threat facing the United States was climate change, as he said in Britain on Wednesday, they should be court-martialed. The latest flare-up of this misplaced, imitative, Canadian public policy lunacy has been around race. We don't have mass pseudo-racist riots as the U.S. does, but 10,000 people have signed a petition demanding the removal of a statue of Egerton Ryerson and the change of name of Ryerson University because of his connection to the native residential schools. Ryerson was a distinguished pioneer of public education in Ontario and like his co-authors of the native residential schools project, he sought to educate native children. Ryerson's intentions were commendable and the University should dismiss these complaints. The discovery of hundreds of graves at a residential school site in British Columbia has naturally inspired another round of Canadian self flagellation. Everyone dies and in this culture most dead people are buried, and in the 19th century inordinate numbers of young people died of tuberculosis and other illnesses; any conclusion about these recently discovered graves should await a serious forensic examination. As I've often written before, the native people have substantial grievances and Canada's policy towards them has generally failed, and we have to do

better. The residential schools question is much more ambiguous than has been represented in the summary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The leaders of the native victimhood industry have misled and dishonoured this country; Few Canadians are aware that we are officially pursuing the proposals of the Dussault-Erasmus Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report of 1996 that proposed greatly expanding land in Canada that will be permanently designated to native people where they may flourish autonomously and tax-free.

I've had some email and twitter exchanges this week with exponents of the self-awarded guilt of their "white privilege." All members of all reputable groups should be proud of what they are; in this respect as in some others, the gay community has shown us the way forward. While some white people, like some people of all other races, have abused their positions, that justifies no collective guilt. The concept of white guilt is abusive.

To cite the refreshingly original Canadian writer Irving Layton, "Philistinism is not Olympian serenity and the spitefulness of the weak is not moral indignation." Canada should try to lead the world in addressing these issues constructively, and not in misplaced and simpleminded self-degradation. That should be our answer to those trying to rename Ryerson University, evict John A. Macdonald from our national consciousness, and abolish Canada Day as a result of conjurations of misplaced shame. It is time to make a bonfire of political correctness and return to "systemic" common sense.

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